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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: NIGERIA: REGIONAL TIP CONFERENCE A SUCCESS

**¶1. SUMMARY:** Embassy Abuja hosted a Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Conference which brought together representatives from nine USG missions in West and Central Africa and four funding agencies/bureaus in Washington to forge an anti-trafficking strategy for the region and coordinate future programs with other donors and international organizations. END SUMMARY.

**¶2.** Representatives from U.S. Embassies in Togo, Benin, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Mali, Cote d'Ivoire, Gabon, Guinea and Nigeria joined Washington-based officials from DRL, INL, Department of Labor (DOL) and USAID for a two-day regional conference on Trafficking in Persons, hosted by Embassy Abuja and Consulate Lagos December 4-5. This conference had been scheduled for October but was postponed after the attacks of September 11. A representative of the U.S. Mission in Cameroon was invited but at the last minute could not attend.

**¶3.** The first day of the conference, held at Consulate Lagos, involved only USG participants, allowing the sharing of information on trafficking profiles in the individual countries and trends in the region. Participants also learned of existing USG-funded programs that target TIP, including DOL's impressive \$4.3 million nine-country regional program to fight child-trafficking through the ILO's International Program for the Elimination of Child Labor. A representative from USAID/Washington's Office of Women in Development offered a briefing on USAID's Sustainable Tree Crop Program, an effort started with exclusively environmental goals but which has recently taken up the task of assessing the extent and underlying factors of child trafficking to the cocoa farms of Cote d'Ivoire. Washington-based participants briefed the group on various Washington-based sources of funding for potential anti-TIP projects, including INL, ESF, DHRF, DOL and USAID DA monies.

**¶4.** During the first's day working session the USG representatives reviewed and added to a draft strategy produced by the Africa Bureau's Regional Affairs Office. After developing an over-arching goal for the strategy, the group identified priority areas for USG anti-TIP programs, drafted several short and long-term objectives to be achieved under the three general categories of the USG's International Anti-TIP Policy - Protection, Prosecution and Prevention.

**¶5.** The group also produced a list of tactical tools with which to advance these objectives, namely: greater diplomatic advocacy, both public and private, of TIP-related issues; engagement of ECOWAS and other regional organizations; collaboration with other donors to fund programs of international organizations such as UNICEF, IOM and ILO-IPEC that are already active in this field in West and Central Africa; and improved intra-USG coordination of resources and programs aimed at the TIP problem in the West and Central African region. (Note: The revised draft strategy will be sent to AF/RA after the COM's of the participating U.S. Missions have had a chance to approve the draft. End note) All agreed that the strategy should call for increased and better coordinated delivery of USG resources allocated for anti-trafficking projects in the region.

**¶6.** The regional and Washington representatives agreed that voluntary prostitution, which is prevalent throughout the region, should not be addressed by the strategy; rather our collective efforts should be focused on the transnational trafficking of children for labor exploitation and the sex trafficking of girls and women (largely from Nigeria). A consensus also emerged on the need to place top priority on prevention efforts, namely education and awareness

campaigns. This arose from the acknowledgement that attempts to rehabilitate the victims of trafficking in West and Central Africa are extremely difficult; preventing new victims is far more cost effective and prospects for success appear brighter as many at-risk populations do not appear well aware of the trafficking dangers.

¶17. The second half of the conference, hosted by the Ambassador at his residence, invited the participation of five other donor governments represented by Nigeria-based diplomats (the Netherlands, Norway, and Italy) and visitors from London (Scotland Yard and National Criminal Intelligence Service) and Brussels (Belgian Ministry of Interior) as well as officials from the World Bank, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), UNICEF, the UN Office of Drug Control and Crime Prevention (UNODCCP), ECOWAS, and the Special Assistant to President Obasanjo on Human Trafficking and Child Trafficking.

¶18. The second day opened with an insightful briefing by Anne Kielland, A Norwegian Child Survival Specialist who had conducted a year-long research project into child trafficking for labor in Benin for the World Bank. Kielland briefed the group on the findings of her research, which drew on a sampling of 6,000 households of more than 20,000 children -- making it the most reliable and comprehensive study done to date.

¶19. Kielland's study found predictable general linkages between poverty and lack of education with a high incidence of trafficking. Surprisingly, however, her data shows that it is the more affluent households within poor villages who traffic their children at a higher rate. Kielland believes the economic expectations of these households are higher -- basically greed leading to the "commodification" of children -- and they have access to the networks outside of their villages allowing them to "place" their children with traffickers. Also, the availability of primary education in a village has no positive effect on trafficking, but a secondary school does. The presence of TVs and organized sports (soccer) seem to encourage trafficking; animist households tend to traffic more than Christian and Muslim family units.

¶10. The IOM briefed on its ongoing Nigeria program (\$2.1 million), which is funded by Belgium, the Netherlands and Italy, as well as a new 9-country regional program (\$4 million) it hopes to start next year. (Comment: The Nigeria-based ILO-IPEC representative could not attend the conference to brief on the ILO-IPEC's \$4.3 million, three-year program for nine countries, which is completely funded by USDOL and represents the largest USG anti-TIP commitment in the region. End Comment) UNICEF explained its expanding programs both regional and country-specific to combat child trafficking from children's rights perspective. ECOWAS and UNODCCP described their nascent efforts to deal with trafficking by using the ECOWAS structure to improve legal provisions dealing with TIP within member states. The group heard from the Nigerian President's Special Assistant on Human Trafficking and Child Labor on how the Obasanjo Administration has moved to address what is perceived as an alarming rise in trafficking in and out of Nigeria, including the President's plans to host a global summit on TIP in Abuja next year.

¶11. Comment: The conference gave the U.S. Missions in the region a valuable opportunity to exchange views on the trafficking problem as seen from their respective host countries as well to engage others donors and international organizations on improved coordination of anti-trafficking programs. Once circulated among the Embassies in the region for approval by Chiefs of Mission, the draft strategy produced by the conference will be transmitted to the Department. It should serve STATE/AF and other Washington offices/agencies as a good foundation for diplomatic and programmatic initiatives in the region. We look to STATE/AF for approval and elaboration of the strategy, including clear next steps and possible commitments of new resources for USG anti-TIP efforts in the region.